



## ***AOT in Action***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

### **A Message from Director Sherry Henry:**

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Good afternoon,

Congratulations to the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community for the completion of the amazing new [Salt River Fields at Talking Stick](#) spring training facility!

The newest [Cactus League](#) ballpark will be home to our own Arizona Diamondbacks as well as the Colorado Rockies. It is the first Major League Baseball spring training facility to be built on Native American land in the nation!

Spring training games are such an incredible tourism asset for Arizona and have an economic benefit that resonates throughout the entire state. Last year, more than 1.47 million fans attended spring training games generating nearly \$350 million in economic impact for our state. Because of the unique sports draw, we continually look for opportunities to promote the Cactus League Spring Training games as well enticing fans to extend their visit and experience many statewide destinations.

Also, if you know of any baseball enthusiasts, or are one yourself, there will be a day-long grand opening celebration on Saturday, February 19, to kick off the new season of “[Play Ball: The Cactus League Experience](#).”

The family-friendly celebration will be at the Arizona Historical Society museum, 1300 N. College Avenue, in Tempe. The new Play Ball exhibit opens to the public at 10 a.m. To learn more about Play Ball and the opening festivities, visit [www.playballexperience.com](http://www.playballexperience.com).

Spring training games will be held from February 25 through March 29. For more information about Cactus League Spring Training and a schedule of games, visit [www.cactusleague.com](http://www.cactusleague.com).

In other news...Happy Valentine's Day and Arizona 99<sup>th</sup> Statehood Day! Be sure to join us for the [Countdown to the Centennial](#) event today on the Senate Lawn of the Arizona Capitol. Today, Governor Jan Brewer, along with state dignitaries, business leaders and community

representatives officially kick off the Countdown to the Centennial campaign “***Celebrate the Arizona Experience***,” a year-long commemoration with activities and events that will culminate on Arizona’s official centennial date, February 14, 2012.

For the rest of the day there will be more than 60 exhibitors showcasing Arizona Centennial projects and events that will be occurring throughout the year. It’s a great event for all Arizonans to learn about our state’s dynamic history!

Have a great week.

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### **AOT News**

#### **One Day Left to Enter AOT’s Spring Training Day Video Contest!**

AOT has asked its 32,000+ Facebook fans to provide a two minute or less video that describes their ideal Arizona Spring Training day. Users can submit creative descriptions on which Cactus League team they would like to see play, where they would eat, and how else they would enjoy the gorgeous spring weather in Arizona!

AOT will choose the most creative, thoughtful and original video. The finalist will win:

- 4 tickets to a Cactus League Spring Training game at Camelback Ranch (home of the Chicago White Sox and the Los Angeles Dodgers)
- 3 night stay for 4 at the Wigwam Golf Resort & Spa along with,
  - 2 rounds of championship golf
  - A family golf clinic
  - Dinner for 4 at Litchfield’s restaurant
  - Daily access to the Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spa
- Dinner for 4 at Haus Murphy’s (German restaurant and local phoenix attraction)
- Tours of Arizona attractions

Videos can be submitted through **Tuesday, February 15, 2011** on the “contests” tab at <http://www.facebook.com/arizonatravel>.

#### **New Update to AOT’s Research Web site!**

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT’s business-to-business Web site [www.azot.gov](http://www.azot.gov).

- [Gross Sales & Tourism Taxes November 2010](#)
- [National Park Visitation December 2010](#)
- [National Park Visitation November 2010](#)
- [State Park Visitation December 2010](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at [melkins@azot.gov](mailto:melkins@azot.gov).

### **AOT on the Road Workshop in Nogales!**

The Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) will be in Nogales, **Wednesday, February 23** with its outreach program, **AOT on the Road!**

Felipe Garcia, VP of Marketing for the Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau, will provide a presentation for the group. He will be discussing the latest marketing tactics his agency has used to reach out to the Sonora, Mexico market.

AOT on the Road is an informative program that provides information on what our agency has to offer your community, such as technical assistance, marketing techniques, trade & media partnerships and research information. Through these useful sessions you'll be able to meet one-on-one with AOT staff to discuss tourism promotion and development, as well as to share your region's successes with us.

The workshop is **complimentary** and information is below.

#### **AOT on the Road Workshop**

[Oasis Cinema](#)

240 W. Roper Rd.

Nogales, AZ 85621

The **complimentary** workshop will be held from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., with registration from 7:30–8:00 a.m.

We hope you take advantage of this great opportunity to participate with our agency and meet the AOT team!

To R.S.V.P., please submit your name, the name of your organization and your contact information to [ATURSVP@azot.gov](mailto:ATURSVP@azot.gov).

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### **Upcoming Events & Activities**

#### **[Canada Sales Mission \(West\)](#)**

Date: February 14- 18

Location: Alberta & Saskatchewan

#### **[Descubre Phoenix 4th Annual Golf Tournament](#)**

Date: February 18

Location: Hermosillo, Mexico

#### **[VISIT USA Business Week by Expo Vacaciones](#)**

Date: February 22 – 23, 2011

Location: Mexico City, Mexico

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## Arizona Centennial News

### **The Countdown to Centennial begins on Monday, February 14th!**

Come down to the State Capitol and celebrate Arizona's 99th Statehood Day on Monday! Roam around the EXPO, full of 60+ booths and see what events and projects are happening across Arizona in the next year.

Enjoy the EXPO from start to finish, from 10am to 2pm. Or pack a lunch for yourself and your friends and family and enjoy the afternoon on the Senate Lawn. Join Dave Pratt at the Countdown Stage and hear from 20 different performers from all over the state, including Marshall Trimble, Arizona's official state historian.

This is a perfect day to celebrate our amazing state. Take this opportunity to see the Arizona Centennial Copper Chopper up close. You can even purchase a ticket(s) to win the Arizona Copper Chopper. Plus, be the first to see and purchase some of the Official Centennial Merchandise.

Hope to see everyone there!

For more information on the Countdown to Centennial or the Centennial visit [www.AZ100years.org](http://www.AZ100years.org).

### **Arizona CENTennial Penny Drive Officially Launched**

The Arizona CENTennial Penny Drive officially kicked-off on Wednesday, February 9th!

Currently five counties are represented by schools signing-up for the children's legacy project. But we are far from our goal to get as many K-8 schools as possible in all 15 counties to participate.

A standout school is Cactus View Elementary School in Phoenix who kicked-off the event with school assembly. Fourth graders performed our state's anthem "Arizona", kindergartners adorning bandanas sang a little western song and the whole student body cheered "Shine the Dome!" The principal and teachers are to be congratulated for organizing an amazing event!

Encourage schools to join the fun and be a part of this milestone project by signing-up at [www.AZ100YEARS.org](http://www.AZ100YEARS.org) today.

Remember, if you have pennies that you would like to give to this children's legacy project just visit your local Bashas' or Food City stores and you can donate to the Arizona CENTennial Penny Drive.

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## Industry News

### **All Aboard America! Receives National Award**

ALL ABOARD AMERICA! is the prestigious winner of the eighth UMA Vision/Large Operator Award, presented in Tampa, FL, at the United Motorcoach Association (UMA) Expo, January 21, 2011. Candidates are nominated by their industry peers, and are recognized for their sound business practices, dedication, innovation in marketing, operations and customer service, and ability to raise the standards for the motorcoach industry overall. The recipient of this prestigious award must also have an exceptional safety record, maintain its fleet of 15 or more coaches to the highest standards, and be a good corporate citizen to its community.

President and CEO, Jack D. Wigley, who accepted the award on behalf of the company was recognized as someone who employs "servant leadership" which emphasizes the leader's role as a steward of all the company resources.

"All Aboard America!'s success is a direct result of over 190 professionals who dedicate themselves to our valued customers each day, providing a travel experience that will exceed accepted standards through safety, value and trust," noted Wigley.

The company has a distinguished history dating back to 1936 when Henry Page formed the Potash Mines Transportation Company to transport potash miners to and from job sites in Southeast New Mexico. The company became known as Industrial Bus Lines, Inc. when it expanded into West Texas and Arizona in 1971. In 1983, the Midland/Odessa, Texas division was created to serve area schools, churches and universities with charter services and daily runs to San Angelo and Presidio, Texas. Successful acquisitions and expansion added locations in Midland/Odessa, and El Paso, TX; and Phoenix, AZ; and in 2003, the company returned to its roots when a Santa Fe division was added to provide 100+ daily routes for commuters and residents of North Central and South Western New Mexico. Due to its continued expansion, Wigley renamed the company, "All Aboard America!" to reflect its wide array of services and locations.

Today, All Aboard America! is a major player within the motorcoach industry, operating a fleet of more than 90 motor coaches throughout the Southwest, Mexico and North America, thanks to Wigley's ongoing vision and leadership, his dedicated employees, and many satisfied customers.

### **Do Americans Really Hate to Travel?**

If you wonder why less than one-third of US adults have passports -- compared to more than two-thirds in the UK -- you might also wonder: Why don't Americans travel more? Traveling overseas, that is.

That number is just too low for an affluent country such as the US, believes Bruce Bommarito, ceo of the US Travel Association. His explanation is simple: "Americans are comfortable in their own environment." But is it really that simple. And does it matter?

Overseas trips are down by three percent last year compared to 2008, according to the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries. "Not taking the leap is comforting, because this is the American life," Matthew Kepnes, international traveler and creator of NomadicMatt.com, told CNN News. "Breaking outside anything that is your norm is scary."

Tourism experts and avid travelers attribute Americans' lack of interest in international travel to a few key factors, including:

- The United States' own rich cultural and geographic diversity.
- An American skepticism and/or ignorance about international destinations.
- A work culture that prevents Americans from taking long vacations abroad.
- The prohibitive cost and logistics of going overseas.

"In the United States, we have an enormous amount of places we can travel -- basically an entire continent," said author Gary Arndt, who has been traveling abroad and blogging since 2007. "You can do all kinds of things without needing a passport."

Arndt said he could go to any number of different ethnic enclaves within large American cities and get a taste of culture without spending much money or time.

World traveler and writer Kepnes says response to his article on why Americans don't travel had a record response. He blamed geography and cost on the fact that perhaps only 10 percent of Americans travel overseas.

"Many people countered my argument by saying that geography and cost were big factors but if cost and geography played a role in determining where you traveled, no one would ever travel," he wrote.

He concluded: "The reasons why Americans don't travel overseas can be mostly explained by one thing: cultural ignorance." By that, he did not mean Americans are stupid, but that they are ignorant of the world outside their own country, and don't have much interest in other places.

They don't want to know more about the rest of the world. And the news media does not help because coverage of foreign news gets less and less attention.

When media do report on foreign destinations, it's often bad news. "Every time I say I'm going somewhere, people assume that it's dirty, they don't have good hospitals, you're going to get sick or raped or robbed," Arndt said. "If you know something about Colombia, it's drug lords, which hasn't been a problem for 20 years, but that's still what people think of."

Kepnes thinks geography also plays a role in why Americans don't travel overseas. "It's not that America's size makes travel prohibitive, its size is important because people feel there is no reason to leave. We don't need to travel to 'big scary places' when we have deserts, tropical islands, mountains, endless summer, wilderness, snow, and more," he writes.

In other words, travelers don't have to leave the US to "find everything you want here." He does not think that is a positive trait because in a shrinking and threatening outside world, Americans are perhaps ducking knowledge of other cultures and countries.

So does it matter? Almost everyone agrees that travel is good and that it's a positive to see how others live. Kepnes says he doesn't know whether American travel will pick up in the future.

"But I do know that right now, Americans still aren't traveling overseas. And, sadly, that won't change any time soon," he concludes. (*Travel Mole, February 7*)

### **Canada and US Announce New Security Measures**

Small scissors and tools as well as other items have been approved on Canadian flights to improve security and speed up passengers screening time, according to the Minister of State for Transport in Canada.

Meanwhile, in the US, the often-criticized TSA says it is abandoning its useless and long-stuck "orange" threat level in favor of a new system in the next few weeks that will be "built on a clear and simple premise" of providing information to "keep yourselves, your families and your communities safe."

The new threat system will be more detailed and include statements of "imminent threats" or "elevated threats." The alerts also will provide a concise summary of the potential threat, information about actions being taken to ensure public safety, and recommended steps that individuals and communities, businesses and governments can take, according to TSA officials.

In Canada, small tools such as eyeglass screwdrivers that are less than 6 2.4 inches in length will now be among allowed items, according to Transport's Rob Merrifield. Merrifield said the revised list would allow security to focus on more serious threats, such as explosives, and bring Canada's banned item list in line with those of other countries. Canadian airports will also expand use of lines designated for families. The family lines will have equipment designed for bigger items, such as strollers.

"Some of the specific changes may go unnoticed by passengers, but something they will notice is lines will be moving much faster," Merrifield said. He estimated the measures could improve passenger-screening times by 30 percent.

Passenger screenings at airports have become increasingly controversial, particularly in the United States, where some passengers have objected to the use of revealing full-body scanners and extra-thorough pat downs. (*Travel Mole, February 7*)

### **Fly-in, Fly out Meetings are Popular for Good Reasons**

If you wonder why on-site airport conference centers are drawing more attention than ever these days, the sites are promoting not only their convenience but also their more luxurious features.

"Talk about convenient: At a variety of airports, on-site conference centers ensure your group can get business done without ever stepping foot outside the terminal—an accessible feature many planners may not be aware of," says Smartmeetings.com.

The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Conference Center, for example, offers fully-equipped A/V services in its 9,000 square feet of meeting space.

Other full-service airport event options include the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Conference Center, which can host up to 100 meeting-goers; and the Dallas Love Field Airport Conference Center, which offers five state-of-the-art meeting rooms for 6–20 attendees.

The stereotype of airport hotels used to be uncomfortable cinderblock high-rises. But no more. Newer airport hotels feature such amenities as luggage delivered directly to the rooms and upscale features.

The Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport is a Four-Diamond property with award-winning restaurants, a 24-hour gym and 42,000 square feet of function space, to cite just one example. (*Travel Mole, February 7*)

### **STR Releases Optimistic 2011, 2012 Forecast**

The U.S. hotel industry is projected to end 2011 with increases in all three key performance measurements, according to STR's forecast update.

STR projects 2011 occupancy will increase 1.8 percent to 58.5 percent, average daily rate is expected to end the year up 4.2 percent to US\$102.21, and revenue per available room is projected to rise 6.1 percent to US\$59.78.

Supply is expected to report slight growth in 2011 with a 0.7-percent increase, and demand is projected to increase 2.5 percent.

"The stronger hotel demand fundamentals the U.S. hotel industry experienced in 2010 will result in a quicker turnaround than we had expected," said Mark Lomanno, CEO of STR. "While this strength resulted in rapidly recovering occupancies last year, we look for rebounding room rates to lead RevPAR growth in 2011 and 2012. While it may be the second half of 2011 before we begin to see rapidly accelerating room rates, by the time we get to 2012 we now expect room rate growth to rival the boom years of 2006 and 2007."

STR also is projecting increases in all three key performance metrics during 2012. Occupancy is expected to rise 1.7 percent to 59.5 percent, ADR will increase 6.8 percent to US\$109.16, and RevPAR is projected to end the year up 8.6 percent to US\$64.93.

Supply during 2012 is expected to end the year virtually flat with a 0.5-percent increase, and demand is projected to rise 2.2 percent.

This updated forecast was originally presented during the Americas Lodging Investment Summit (ALIS) on 24 January 2011. (*HNN Newswire, February 8*)

### **McFarland State Historic Park GRAND RE-OPENING!**

Florence will celebrate its 26th Annual Tour of Historic Florence on Saturday, February 12, 2011 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Eleven historic homes, commercial buildings, and public buildings dating from 1868 to 1930 will be featured on the tour. Florence is noted for its collection of Territorial period architecture with over 120 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic



Places. The heart of the downtown commercial district retains much of its original western character with old adobe homes, graceful Victorians, and early 20th century commercial structures. The tour not only focuses on the town's architecturally significant buildings, it also gives visitors a glimpse of Florence's colorful past. The stories that shape Florence's history run the gamut from old west gun fights to politicians and movie stars.

In addition to the tour, visitors and residents alike will not want to miss the grand re-opening celebration of McFarland State Historic Park at 10:00 a.m. Special guests Renee Bahl, Executive Director of Arizona State Parks; Marshall Trimble, Arizona's Official State Historian; Jim Garrison, State Historic Preservation Officer; and Florence Mayor Vickie Kilvinger will all speak during the event. The park recently opened after being closed for more than two years thanks to a partnership among Arizona State Parks, the Town of Florence, and Florence Main Street Program. The park now houses the Florence Visitor Center in addition to the museum.

Among the other activities happening that day, the Pinal County Historical Society Museum will present "The Southwest Table" at 2 p.m. where they will have a demonstration of cooking with cactus and other desert plants by Jean Groen, author of "Foods of the Superstitions" and "Plants of the Sonoran Desert and Their Many Uses." The museum will have a special display consisting of American tableware of Southwest design from the 1940's and 1950's.

After the tour, stop by the Florence Aeromodeler Park to see the Fun Fly & Swap Meet just two miles south of Florence on Highway 79. The Blue Adobe Meeting Center will feature their weekly History Hub Matinee Shows at 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. for a separate fee not included in tour admission.

The self-guided Tour of Historic Florence begins in downtown Florence at 291 N. Main Street, at the corner of Main Street and 8th Street. Admission for adults is \$10 in advance or \$12 on the day of the tour, children under 18 are free. Trolleys will provide transportation to tour sites at no additional cost. Proceeds from the tour support downtown revitalization activities of the Florence Main Street Program. Visit [www.florencemainstreet.com](http://www.florencemainstreet.com) or call 520-868-4496 or toll free (866) 977-4496 to buy tickets or get more information.

For more information about Arizona's 30 State Parks go to [www.AZStateParks.com](http://www.AZStateParks.com).

### **Bus Growth Outpacing Air and Rail**

Which was the fastest growing mode of intercity transportation in the US last year: (a) air; (b) rail; or (c) bus? Buses beat everything else, thanks largely to the expansion of "curbside operators," according to researchers at DePaul University in Chicago.

"Intercity bus operations overall expanded by 6 percent in 2010, while curbside operators — which don't run out of established terminals but pick up and drop off passengers at curbside — grew by 23.9 percent," says the study by the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul.

"There was almost a perfect alignment of the stars," said Joseph Schwieterman, director of the report. "There was a new bus model that offers super cheap fares, technological changes that made people willing to take a mode of transportation slower than air travel, and the high fuel prices." A major attraction of the curbside operators is access to Wi-Fi service, he said.

Last year was the third year in a row that bus service was the fastest-growing mode of intercity travel. That reverses a trend unfolding since the mid-1970s, when the traditional intercity bus network was rapidly shrinking, a victim of the opening of interstate highways, growing automobile ownership and the decline of downtown business districts, according to the DePaul study.

"There's been a complete reversal in the trend of intercity bus travel since 2007," said Dale Moser, president of Coach USA/megabus.com. "We have changed the cultural view of what bus travel used to be. And there's obviously a pent-up demand and need for intercity bus travel."  
*(Travel Mole, February 9)*

### **Consumer Spending Driving Growth**

This growth reflects primarily stronger consumer and business spending. During Q4, consumer spending grew at a 4.4 percent rate, the fastest since the first quarter of 2006, helped by strong holiday sales and better vehicle sales. Holiday retail sales showed the largest gain in six years (+5.7%) according to the National Retail Federation. And, General Motors said it posted a 23 percent sales increase in January compared to the year before.

The latest American Express Spending & Saving Tracker also shows relatively strong consumer spending intentions with more than half of U.S. adults planning to spend more (14%) or the same (40%) in 2011 as they did last year. Consumers will continue to focus on savings but they plan to pare this back a bit and focus more spending on themselves. Six percent say they are focused on saving enough for travel.

Our potential traveler market might be particularly open to messages about the physical and psychological benefits of travel this year. Unity Marketing reports that the outlook for the luxury industry is improving. Its Luxury Consumption Index (LCI), a measure of affluent (HHI average \$298,300) consumer confidence, rose 4 points during Q1 '11. The "affluents" spent 4.1 percent more on luxury goods and services in Q4 '10 as compared with the same period in 2009. Travel was among the luxury categories posting the strongest year-over-year gains. Demand for luxury cruises remains strong and affluents are motivated by the desire to create special memories, according to this research.

Consumers still face lots of headwinds – high unemployment, tight credit, high debt levels, falling house prices, and rising gasoline and food prices. But while many analysts do not expect consumer spending to continue rising at such a brisk pace, they expect it to remain strong. HIS Global Insights, for example, expects consumer spending growth of around 3.2 percent this year, helped by the payroll tax cut introduced in December's tax package. *(US Travel Association Newsletter – Outlook, February)*

### **Air Traffic Up but Profits Lag**

Scheduled international passenger traffic rose 8.2 percent in 2010, but airlines have been unable to translate the increase to higher profit margins, posting a "pathetic" 2.7 percent profit margin, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). But, North American carriers saw passenger demand increase by 7.4 percent in 2010 (almost double the increase in capacity last year), leading to significantly higher profits. The coming months, however, will be

marked by oil price uncertainty with rising oil prices threatening to reduce the \$9.1 billion industry profits forecasted earlier by IATA.

In the U.S., the Air Transport Association of America (ATA) reports that passenger revenue rose 9 percent in December 2010, marking the 12th consecutive month of revenue growth. Miles flown by paying passengers increased 3 percent while the average price to fly one mile grew by 6 percent. Passenger revenue improved 6 percent domestically and 16 percent in international markets, led by a 32 percent jump in spending on trans-Pacific and intra-Asia travel.

According to the Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC) 2010 domestic airline travel returned to levels approaching those achieved in 2008 prior to the financial crisis. Based upon aggregate ticket volume data, domestic travel increased by 7 percent in 2010. Domestic travel (tickets with an origin and destination in the U.S.) dropped significantly with the onset of the recession in 2008 (-7.1%) before bottoming out in 2009 when volume posted a year-over-year decline of another 8.3 percent below 2008 levels. Since that time, ARC's data reflect a steady recovery throughout 2010. (*US Travel Association Newsletter – Outlook, February*)

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### **Calendar of Events**

Visit [www.ArizonaGuide.com](http://www.ArizonaGuide.com) to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

### **Connect with the Arizona Office of Tourism!**

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